

Scandinavian Dialect Syntax (before and after) 2005

Øystein Alexander Vangsnes

University of Tromsø

Abstract:

This paper gives an outline of the goals of the pan-Nordic project umbrella *Scandinavian Dialect Syntax* and of how the research collaboration is organized and financed, and of how the collaboration has advanced during the last 4-5 years. Special attention is devoted to the NORMS Nordic Center of Excellence project which in effect constitutes a highly focused branch of the larger network. There are clear scientific advantages of initiating large scale cooperation of the sort represented by the ScanDiaSyn umbrella, but there are also several challenges and obstacles, especially when it comes to funding. The experiences from the ScanDiaSyn collaboration may therefore be useful from the perspective of the organization of research more generally.

1. Introduction

In the following I will outline the main objectives and organization of the Scandinavian Dialect Syntax project umbrella (henceforth ‘ScanDiaSyn’) and also the planning process that formed it.

In many ways the Grand Meeting in Leikanger constituted the kick-off for ScanDiaSyn. The meeting was mainly financed by the network grant given by the Nordic Research Board (NordForsk) for the period 2005–2007. At the time of the meeting, subprojects in Iceland and Sweden had received support for the same period, and a grant for project administration, also for 2005–2007, had been allotted from the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NOS-HS). The *Nordic Center of Excellence in Microcomparative Syntax* (NORMS) was to officially commence only few days after the meeting, on 1 September, with substantial funding from NOS-HS and NordForsk for a five year period. In addition to this several minor grants had been given from mainly common Nordic sources.

The main message of this paper is that the pan-Nordic collaboration in ScanDiaSyn has been, and will continue to be, extremely fruitful in terms of creating synergies and scientific progress. I will however also show that although substantial support has been given from various funding bodies there is still a way to go before all the goals of the project can be reached. The most important obstacle in this respect is the fact that research funding by and large is distributed: the way the project has been conceived and structured, it has become reliant on support from national funding bodies throughout the area.

2. The objectives of ScanDiaSyn

The first preparatory meetings for ScanDiaSyn were held in 2003 (see below), and at an early stage the following four main objectives of the enterprise were formulated.

- (i) to conduct a systematic and coordinated investigation of the syntactic variation across Scandinavian dialects, an area of research that has been neglected in most dialect and language studies in the past.
- (ii) to create a database of transcribed and tagged material generally available and easily accessible for research through a user-friendly interface on the internet.
- (iii) to initiate theoretically driven research on dialectal syntactic variation in the Scandinavian domain in particular.
- (iv) to liaise with other existing dialect syntax projects in Europe and elsewhere so as to enhance the understanding of linguistic diversity and microvariation at a general level.

Existing atlas and database projects for European dialects have been important sources of inspiration for ScanDiaSyn, in particular those carried out for the Northern Italian dialect area and for the Dutch dialects (see the papers by Benincà & Poletto and Barbiers & Bennis in this volume), and the material that is and will be collected within the frame of ScanDiaSyn will be pooled together in a joint database. The goal is to create a database which will be generally available for the research community through a user friendly interface on the internet.

We will return to the methodological sides of the project below.

3. Organization

Since the very start there have been nine research groups that collaborate in ScanDiaSyn. The nine groups are spread across all of the five Nordic countries and there is also one in the autonomous region of the Faroe Islands. The goal has been to establish national subprojects whereby the groups of each country take on the main responsibility for carrying out the collection of data. As we will see below that goal has so far only been reached in part.

The following institutions host the groups:

1. University of Tromsø (NO)
2. Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim (NO)
3. University of Oslo (NO)
4. University of Iceland (IS)
5. University of the Faroe Islands (FO)
6. University of Aarhus (DK)
7. University of Copenhagen (DK)
8. University of Lund (SE)
9. University of Helsinki (FI)

These nine groups have been the same since the first application for support was sent in late 2002, and although dominated by generative syntacticians of the chomskyan tradition the network also includes dialectologists and grammarians with a more general Scandinavianist background and orientation as well as construction grammarians and computational linguists. More detailed information about the constituency of the groups can be found at the ScanDiaSyn homepage (<http://uit.no/scandiasyn>).

In the NordForsk network mentioned in the introduction there are furthermore three non-Nordic groups based at the following institutions:

10. University of Padua (IT)
11. Meertens Institute (NL)
12. University of Edinburgh (UK)

The Italian and Dutch groups were invited to participate in the network because of their valuable experience with similar projects in their own countries, and the group in Edinburgh because it works on issues of syntactic variation in Faroese. In fact, in 2006 the group was awarded a three year British AHRC grant to study verb movement/placement in contemporary Faroese, a perennial issue in Scandinavian syntax.

The Faroese group in the network is otherwise special both in that it is lead by Professor Höskuldur Thráinsson at the University of Reykjavík and in that it has members from other groups in the network. The rationale behind this is that the Faroese linguistic research community is small with many duties and therefore needs to be strengthened from the outside for the purpose of this particular research objective. It should furthermore be pointed out that the Faroese part of ScanDiaSyn is partly covered by the Icelandic subproject, both in terms of funding and in terms of researchers involved, see Thráinsson et al. (this volume).

The group at the University of Oslo has been assigned a special responsibility for developing the technical sides of the project, i.e. the database and various computational tools that are related to that. This group, which in effect constitutes the Text Laboratory of the institution, has

solid expertise and experience with linguistic corpora and with computational processing of language data. One particular new tool which is being developed to meet the specific needs of ScanDiaSyn, is an electronic inter-Scandinavian lexicon. Such a lexicon will facilitate searches in the database across the various Scandinavian varieties. The development of such a lexicon has been defined as a particular subproject, ScanLex, for which some funding has been obtained both from Nordic sources and from the University of Oslo. A partial result from the project is furthermore reported on in Hrafnbjargarson's paper in this volume.

4. Methodology

Although existing archived and digitized material will be included in the ScanDiaSyn database, collection of new material for the purpose of systematic and coordinated syntactic investigation is inevitable. A major shortcoming with existing archive material is that it is predominantly free speech in the form of monologues or interviews: since many syntactic constructions and phenomena are infrequent in actual conversation, one generally needs a much bigger corpus for conducting syntactic investigations than is the case with the study of phonological and morphological phenomena. This is not to say that free speech is useless for the study of syntax, but elicitation techniques (e.g. questionnaires, written/oral tasks etc.) often provide a more direct channel towards revealing the rules governing syntactic phenomena.

A questionnaire with test sentences to be used at measure points throughout the whole of Scandinavia will therefore be prepared. The questionnaire has a common core for the whole area, but it will also allow for questions on constructions and properties that are known to have a limited geographical distribution. The obvious advantage of a common questionnaire is that, besides amassing syntax data, it will yield directly comparable data throughout the geographical expanse.

This questionnaire will always be orally presented to the informants, either by a fieldworker who speaks the same or similar dialect or by a local collaborator, trained by the fieldworker. In addition to the oral interviews there will also be elicitation tasks, both oral and written ones, which are designed to trigger the production of specific syntactic constructions. Additionally, at all measure points a section of free speech will be recorded, in the default case with a videocamera and with wireless microphones.

On these methodological issues we can draw heavily on several sources of past experience. In addition to the valuable knowledge of the liased network groups in Padua (see Benincà and Poletto, this volume) and within the SAND project (see Barbiers and Bennis, this volume), the Icelandic network group has acquired considerable experience through their

pilot study on data collection (see Thráinsson et al., this volume). Furthermore, the Oslo network group has recently completed the collection of data for a speech corpus of spoken Norwegian in the Oslo area (*NoTa Oslo*) where video recoding was used, and their experience on the matter will of course be utilized also within the ScanDiaSyn project.

As for the number of measure points and the representativity of the informants, there will be some variation across the area, but also in this respect there will be a common core: at all measure points there should be at least one older informant with little or no education apart from obligatory public school, and who has grown up and lived at the place all or most of his or her life. In most cases, however, there will be a much broader selection. For the Norwegian area, for instance, the goal is that each measure point should have 4 informants, one young male, one young female, one older male, and one older female. Although not sufficient to carry out real sociolinguistic studies of variation, this will at least facilitate pilot studies with such a perspective. In the Icelandic project, however, a broader sociolinguistic coverage is the goal since preliminary results show that the variation found in Iceland is evidently more age-related than related to geography (see Thráinsson et al., this volume). For the Icelandic sub-project the aim is therefore to have four age categories with four informants in each at all measure points.

In parts of Scandinavia it may be difficult to find informants with no education besides obligatory public school, especially as far as the younger generations are concerned, but focusing on speakers who have a (non-prestigious) practical occupation may in such cases serve as an equally relevant criterion.

The number of measure points will not be even throughout the Scandinavian area, neither with respect to geographic expanse nor to demographic coverage. The aim is to have 100 measure points in Norway (i.e. about 5-6 in each county) and a similar number for Sweden and the Swedish-speaking part of Finland, whereas there will be about 30 points in Iceland and only 11 in Denmark. It is quite clear that dialect levelling has reached different stages in the various areas: it is especially pervasive in Denmark whereas it is possibly slowest in Norway and parts of Swedish speaking Finland.

5. The database

The database under development within ScanDiaSyn will be the first pan-Scandinavian dialect collection ever. It will contain transcribed and tagged dialect material linked up with sound files. The material will comprise both free speech and results from questionnaires, systematically collected from the various measure points distributed across the Scandinavian dialect

continuum. As far as possible and feasible existing dialect material will be included in the database (e.g. *Cordiale* in Denmark and *SweDia 2000* in Sweden).

The database will be generally available for searches through a user-friendly web interface. The search interface will allow searches for both word forms and grammatical categories, and it will of course be possible to search for geographical and other non-linguistic variables. It should also be possible to do searches across the individual Scandinavian languages, a feature which requires a well-functioning inter-Scandinavian lexicon, and a particular sub-project carried out by the Oslo group is to develop such a lexicon.

Useful and well-functioning features of existing search interfaces for corpora at the Text Laboratory in Oslo (in particular NoTa Oslo) will be incorporated in the ScanDiaSyn database, and it will furthermore be structured and made compatible with the Dutch dialect syntax database DynaSAND (see Barbiers and Bennis, this volume). One particularly interesting and useful feature of DynaSAND which will be adapted to the Scandinavian database is the dynamic map application which allows the individual researcher to generate maps according to his or her needs. This feature will allow efficient visualization of co-variation among grammatical phenomena.

6. History

6.1 Background

There is little doubt that syntactic variation has been an under-studied field of research in Scandinavian dialectology. The following state of affairs is quite telling in this respect. In August 2002 the 7th Nordic Dialectologist Conference was organized in Voss, Norway. This conference series gather dialectologists from all of Scandinavia and takes place every four year. In the 575 page proceedings volume (Akselberg et al. 2003) only one of the altogether 32 contributions deals with syntax (Eklund 2003), and this paper merely points out the need for syntactic dialect studies (in Sweden) and does not really discuss any specific grammatical phenomena.

Shortly after the conference, in the fall of 2002, the first initiatives to work towards a Scandinavian dialect syntax project were taken. Although these initiatives did not come as a direct result of Eklund's presentation, the fall of 2002 is therefore all the same a convenient starting point for the following exposition where we will pinpoint the main milestones for the project umbrella in the well over four years that have passed since.

In 2002 an interest for dialect syntax had already been building up in Scandinavia for some time, nurtured by an increasing awareness of the

neglect of syntax in traditional dialectology.¹ In fact one could say that the strong interest in comparative studies of the Scandinavian standard languages that begun among generative syntacticians in the late seventies and escalated in the eighties anticipated the current boost in interest also for dialectal syntactic variation. Some of the leading figures in these early generative comparative Scandinavian syntax circles are now central also in ScanDiaSyn and NORMS: Höskuldur Thráinsson and Christer Platzack deserve special mentioning.

From the mid eighties onwards we see an interest for dialect syntax in Scandinavia. In Norway there were for instance several generative studies on the lack of Verb Second in matrix *wh*-questions in Norwegian dialects (Nordgård 1985, Åfarli 1986, Taraldsen 1986). Cast within a different framework Jan-Ola Östman's 1986 thesis (Berkeley) was in effect a detailed study of the grammatical and pragmatic systems of his own native Solv Finland-Swedish dialect.

Lars-Olof Delsing's 1993 doctoral thesis on the internal structure of the Scandinavian noun phrase (Lund University) was one of the first generative dissertations to include a good portion of dialect data. Around the same time Anders Holmberg and Görel Sandström at the University of Umeå were running a project on the noun phrase structure of Northern Swedish dialects, and some of the publications that resulted from that project became well-known internationally (see e.g. Sandström and Holmberg 1994, Holmberg and Sandström 1996; see also their papers in Vangsnes et al. 2003).

There were also several events that have paved the way towards the structured network that exists today. For instance, as a part of the project just mentioned, Anders Holmberg organized a workshop on Scandinavian noun phrase structure in Umeå in September 1992. Many of the papers presented at the workshop dealt with dialectal variation across the Scandinavian languages (see Holmberg 1992). In November 1995 the workshop *Syntaktisk variasjon i norske målføre* [Syntactic variation in Norwegian dialects] was organized by myself during the 6th meeting on Norwegian language (MONS) in Bergen (see Vangsnes 1996). Two years later, at MONS 7 in Trondheim, Tor A. Åfarli gave a plenary lecture on dialect syntax, and a combined workshop on dialectal and historical syntax was

¹ An early wording of this neglect can be found in Sandøy (1987:100) where he writes that "the syntactic variation has to little extent been charted for Norwegian" (my translation ØAV). The book is a textbook on Norwegian dialectology and the statement introduces a four page section on syntactic variation. On the other hand, Sandøy has himself conducted valuable studies of dialect syntactic issues such as for example Sandøy (1988).

held at the conference (see Åfarli 1998). Several of the scholars who are now active in ScanDiaSyn and NORMS participated in one or several of these activities, in addition to names that have already been mentioned, not the least Peter Svenonius who is now the responsible leader of NORMS. It is also worth mentioning that several of the current ScanDiaSyn researchers have earlier worked together in the network project *Intercomprehension in Germanic Languages Online* (IGLO), also led by Svenonius.

There are no doubt additional scholarly works, events as well as formal and informal relations between groups and individual researchers that could have deserved to be mentioned in a detailed historical account of grammar oriented dialectological research in Scandinavian the last couple of decades, but a full survey would lead too far here. Some more direct triggers for the establishing the ScanDiaSyn cooperation were the following. In 2002 Christer Platzack and myself had already been invited to participate as representatives for the Scandinavian languages at the ESF Exploratory Workshop on European Dialect Syntax in Padua in September 2003. In November 2002 the two of us plus Lars-Olof Delsing had an informal meeting where the idea of setting up a Scandinavian project was discussed. A decision was then made to send applications for preparatory meeting, and nine Scandinavian research groups were invited to participate in the applications: these nine groups still form the main network of ScanDiaSyn. The major milestones after this can be listed as follows.

2003:

- The first planning meeting is held in Lund in April 2003, supported by NorFA (the predecessor of NordForsk, the Nordic Research Board). The main objectives and organization of the project is by and large established already at this stage.
- In September Christer Platzack and I present the plan for the Scandinavian dialect syntax project at the Exploratory Workshop for European Dialect Syntax in Padua. The workshop is funded by the European Science Foundation (ESF).
- In October the second planning meeting for Scandinavian dialect syntax is held in Copenhagen with funding from NOS-H (Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities).
- In November the workshop *Syntaktisk variasjon i nordiske målføre II* [Syntactic variation in Scandinavian dialects II] is organized by Tor A Åfarli during MONS 10 in Kristiansand with six paper presentations by scholars and students active in the ScanDiaSyn network.

2004:

- In January 2004 Jan-Ola Östman and I organize the workshop *Syntactic Microvariation* during the 20th Scandinavian Conference of Linguistics in Helsinki. The invited speaker is Sjef Barbiers from the Meertens Instituut and the Dutch dialect syntax atlas (SAND). Additional preparatory meetings with participants from some of the groups are held in connection with the conference.
- In February Höskuldur Thráinsson and his group in Icelandic receive a grant from the Icelandic Research Institute to conduct a pilot study of methods for collection of syntactic dialect data. Some of the results from this pilot study are presented in Thráinsson et al. (this volume).
- In May ScanDiaSyn is granted some support from Nordplus Språk which makes it possible to start the preparation of the database in the project. (Nordplus Språk is a funding body under the Nordic Council of Ministers.)
- In the beginning of June a larger allowance is granted for project administration and coordination by NOS-HS (Joint Committee for the Nordic Councils for the Humanities and Social Sciences) for the period 2005-2007.
- In October NordForsk announces that they will support the extended ScanDiaSyn network, comprising of twelve research groups, with a network grant for the period 2005-2007.
- In November the Swedish Research Council decides to support the Swedish part of ScanDiaSyn, also for the period 2005-2007, albeit with significant budgetary cuts.
- On 28 November to 2 December Janne Bondi Johannessen and I organize a PhD course in Oslo with the title *Methods and tools for the study of grammatical variation*. There are about 35 registered participants at the course, and main lecturers are Leonie Cornips, Cecilia Poletto, and Jan-Ola Östman.
- In December the application for *Nordic Center of Excellence in Microcomparative Syntax* (NORMS, cf. below) makes it to the second and final stage of the selection process: the initial application had been sent a couple of months earlier.

2005:

- In January 2005 the ScanLex project receives a grant equal to eight man months from the Nordic Research Council. A condition for the grant is that the project cooperates with the parallel project

Netordbogen [the Web Dictionary] which also receives support from another body under the Nordic Council of Ministers (Nordplus Språk).

- In January it is also announced that the Icelandic Research Institute will support the Icelandic-Faroese subproject for the period 2005-2007.
- In february the first regular project meeting for ScanDiaSyn is held in Lund with all the leaders of the nine primary groups and a few other representatives present. In the course of the spring semester there are local brain storming meetings in the various groups where suggestions for grammatical topics are discussed. A minor network meeting is held in Tromsø in June where the many suggestions are organized and structured into a single list.
- In the end of May NOS-HS announces that NORMS is one of altogether four projects that will be supported as Nordic Centers of Excellence. The official starting date is 1 September, but it takes until the end of the year before the finalizing of contracts and transfer of money is in place.
- In August the first *Grand Meeting for Scandinavian Dialect Syntax* takes place in Leikanger, Norway. There are altogether 50 participants at the meeting. The main focus is the project organization, and there are several presentations based on the experiences with similar projects (see the papers in this volume by Barbiers and Bennis, Benincà and Poletto, Corver et al., and Sandøy). The portfolio of potential dialect syntactic topics is discussed and enlarged in group work during the meeting. There is also a workshop for PhD students and young researchers, and written versions of most of the presentations can be found in this volume.

2006:

- At the end of January 2006 the first thematic NORMS workshop is held in Tromsø. The topic is *Inversion and Verb Second*. Later in the same year three more workshops are held: *Pragmatic Particles* (Helsinki, June), *Subjects and Microcomparative Variation* (Trondheim, August), and *Negation* (Oslo, November). (In January 2007 two more workshops are organized, one on *Object Positions* (Århus) and another on *Verb Placement* (Reykjavík.)
- In March 2006 the *Workshop on Syntactic Doubling in European Dialects* is organized at the Meertens Institute in Amsterdam as a part of the ESF European Young Investigator project *European Dialect Syntax*. Five of the presentations deal with issues in Scandi-

navian dialects, and they are held by participants in ScanDiaSyn/NORMS.

- In the beginning of June the first NORMS dialect fieldwork takes place in Northern Ostrobothnia in Finland (see below) over five days.
- Immediately after the fieldwork the second Grand Meeting for Scandinavian Dialect Syntax is held in Solf (Sulva) outside of Vaasa. There are 38 participants from all the twelve groups in the extended network present. The main topic of the meeting is *Dialects and syntactic theories*. Also at this meeting there is a workshop for PhD students and young researchers, and the portfolio on topics again forms the basis for group work.
- In August 2006 the 8th Nordic Dialectologist Conference takes place in Århus. The ScanDiaSyn umbrella is presented in a plenary lecture, and altogether eight papers on dialect syntactic issues are given within the frame of a workshop.

It goes without saying that during the four years that have elapsed between the 7th and 8th Nordic Dialectologist Conferences the study of syntactic variation has been firmly set on the agenda within Scandinavian linguistics. That does not mean that all the objectives defined for ScanDiaSyn have been reached. We will return to the current status of the project below where we will identify some of the main obstacles for the project. Let us in the meantime have a closer look at the NORMS project.

7. NORMS – Nordic Center of Excellence in Microcomparative Syntax

7.1 The network

In the fall of 2004 the *Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences* (NOS-HS) called for applications for their new program for Nordic Centers of Excellence. The application process had two stages. The 39 applications in the first round were reduced to 18 in the second round, and the NORMS project was one out of four applications that were finally granted support. The NCoE program of NOS-HS essentially funds large network projects: the annual allowance for NORMS is 465.000 EUR. A prerequisite for applying was that partners from institutions in at least three of the Nordic countries take part in the collaborative project.

The core idea of NORMS is to create synergy between the existing ScanDiaSyn network and the Center for Advanced Study in Theoretical Linguistics (CASTL) in Tromsø. Broadly stated, the synergy amounts to combining CASTL's efforts to understand the workings of the human ling-

uistic capacity and ScanDiaSyn's overall goal of conducting a systematic and coordinated investigation of the syntactic variation across the Scandinavian dialect continuum. Seven of nine core ScanDiaSyn groups participate in NORMS: (i) Helsinki, (ii) Tromsø, (iii) Lund, (iv) Oslo, (v) Trondheim, (vi) Aarhus, and (vii) Reykjavík. The responsible leader of NORMS is Peter Svenonius (Tromsø), and the project is administered at CASTL in Tromsø with Svenonius and myself as managers.

Almost fifty researchers are currently enlisted as collaborators in the NORMS project. Two short-term researchers at postdoc-level have so far been hired by NORMS money, Dr. Gunnar Hrafn Hrafnbjargarson in Tromsø and Dr. Mai Ellin Tungseth in Lund, and additional collaborators will be hired during 2007. About half of the total budget is reserved for this purpose, whereas the rest mostly covers the various activities in the network plus administration. There are strict mobility requirements with respect to hiring scientific personnel: a NORMS researcher can only be employed by a NORMS partner in a different country than where he or she has been based.

Although based on the existing ScanDiaSyn network, more focused research goals have been defined for NORMS so as to make it an independent and coherent research project. In essence, one may say that NORMS is more theoretically oriented and does not undertake to collect data from a pre-defined number of measure points evenly spread over the geographic expanse. To some extent focusing on the theoretical sides of ScanDiaSyn was felt as a necessary strategic choice in the competition for the specific call for Nordic Centers of Excellence, but as we will see below in effect it means that there are parts of the total ScanDiaSyn enterprise that still await funding.

7.2 *Thematic groups and organized fieldwork*

Empirical investigations do however make up an integrated part also of NORMS. The main collective activities in the network are defined as *area-focused* and *form-focused*, respectively. The area-focused subprojects are designed to document the characteristics of particular dialects, and each semester a dialect workshop/fieldwork of about a week is organized where one particular dialect or dialect area is studied by a group consisting of members from the various partner groups.

In the form-focused subprojects, particular points of syntactic variation are the center of attention. These subprojects have been organized around ten trans-institutional thematic groups, constituted of the involved researchers whose analytic experience is most relevant. The groups are currently (subproject leaders in parentheses): (i) the syntax of noun phrases (Delsing), (ii) verb placement in main and embedded clauses (Thráninsson), (iii)

the syntax of the Left Periphery (Vangsnes), (iv) Object Shift (Vikner), (v) verb particle constructions (Svenonius), (vi) vP/VP syntax (Platzack), (vii) subject types (Áfarli), (viii) binding (Lødrup), (ix) pragmatic particles (Östman), and (x) negation and negative polarity (Johannessen). On average each group will convene once a year for a meeting or workshop.

The form-focused subprojects should feed the area-focused ones. With a clear outline in advance of the most important points of variation, a fieldworker from a thematic group who participates in a fieldwork on a particular dialect will have the clear objective of procuring samples of (or judgments about) phenomena (i–x) above, thus supplying the form-focused subprojects with the information they need for the variety in question, in addition to obtaining basic samples of naturally occurring speech. In this way we expect to achieve more comprehensive results than previous investigations. Moreover we expect to achieve results that will have immediate international relevance as the research questions are framed in a way that bears directly on ongoing international research.

About a year after NORMS fully started running this innovative research strategy of the project is now gradually being installed. The interaction between the form-focused and area-focused subprojects can still be refined, but with so many partners and individuals involved, most of whom contribute to the project with their own research time and means, an initial adjustment phase is inevitable. As mentioned above, by the end of January 2007 six thematic workshops and will have taken place. Additionally, in connection with the first meeting of the scientific advisory board in Tromsø in September 2006, a two day workshop was organized where a senior representative of each group in addition to the three board members² presented a paper.

Furthermore, two dialect workshops were organized in 2006. In addition to the aforementioned fieldwork in Northern Ostrobothnia, Finland, in June 2006, there was a week-long field excursion to the island of Senja, Northern Norway, in October/November 2006. The third fieldwork will be organized in Älvdalen, Sweden, in May 2007.

During the first workshop there were eight fieldworkers who visited five locations in the northernmost part of Swedish-speaking Finland. At the second workshop there were fifteen fieldworkers who visited four locations on Senja, interacting with well over 70 consultants altogether.

² The scientific advisory board for NORMS consists of Professor Artemis Alexiadou (University of Stuttgart), Professor emeritus Frederick Newmeyer (University of Washington), and Professor Luigi Rizzi (University of Siena).

These two first fieldworks have been very instructive in terms of methodology. At the last workshop there were participants from all of the ten thematic groups except for one, and each researcher would concentrate on a limited set of issues when interviewing the dialect speakers. The topics ranged from questions concerning article doubling and past participle agreement to issues concerning verb placement and the syntax of verb particles. A report from the first workshop is likely to appear in the proceedings from the second grand meeting in Solf, and more detailed reports from the Senja workshop will appear at a later stage. Besides this both fieldworks have unveiled intriguing issues that will constitute an integrated part of scientific papers that report on the research by the individual scholars.

8. The current status of ScanDiaSyn

At this point in time (January 2007) it is unquestionable that the latter two main objectives of ScanDiaSyn listed in section 2 are well underway to being fulfilled: theoretically driven research on dialectal syntactic variation in the Scandinavian domain has indeed been initiated, so far culminating in the NORMS grant, and strong operating connections with existing research in microcomparative syntax outside Scandinavia have been and continue to be established.

8.1 Funding

However, with respect to the first two main objectives there is still a way to go before the goals can be reached. Although the ScanDiaSyn efforts have received national support in most of the partner countries, an important piece of funding still remains: sufficient resources to develop the database and its applications have not yet been obtained, and neither has there so far been allocated financial means to carry out the Norwegian part of the investigation. This lack of funding is due to the fact that applications to the Norwegian Research Council have been turned down three years in a row (last in December 2006), despite getting excellent reviews by anonymous experts. The Norwegian Research Council has been considered the most appropriate funding body for these parts given that the Oslo group has been given a designated responsibility for the technical sides of ScanDiaSyn.

In effect this means that the development of the database is currently dormant and only benefits from experience gained from other projects that the Text Laboratory in Oslo is carrying out, and that a longer perspective must be applied to the finalization of the database.

The systematic charting is in fact so far not fully financed in all other parts of Scandinavia either. The Icelandic grant (see section 6.5) will in

principle fully cover the collection of data in Iceland and partly in the Faroe Islands, and in December 2006 the two Danish groups in the network received support from their national research council to carry out the rather limited empirical investigations in the 11 locations that will make up the Danish measure points.

However, the Swedish grant (see section 6.4) was so much cut back that a decision was made to concentrate on transcribing material from the recent SweDia 2000 project and postpone the collection of questionnaire based data. The SweDia 2000 material, which was collected around 2000, includes recordings from 107 measure points in Sweden and Swedish speaking Finland with at least 12 informants at each point. The material was generously made available for ScanDiaSyn and it would of course be senseless not to process it so that it could be integrated in the common database.

This means that further funding must be sought for the collection of data in both Sweden and Norway as well as for the development of the database, and a longer perspective for the ScanDiaSyn project has become necessary. And although the time frame for the Icelandic and Swedish sub-projects has been 2005-2007, the NordForsk network can be prolonged for the period 2008-2009 and NORMS will, if renewed after a midterm evaluation, run through 2010, so there will in any case still be a strong focus on syntactic microcomparison in Scandinavia in the years to come.

8.2 *Scientific results*

One important aspect of the above acclaimed success of ScanDiaSyn with respect to boosting an interest for dialect syntax is the fact that a great deal of microcomparative studies are now being carried out by individual researchers. The papers in this volume should carry evidence for that, and an updated record of relevant publications by ScanDiaSyn researchers is kept on the home page. Several PhD students and young researchers have been recruited to the ScanDiaSyn enterprise and are now carrying out individual projects with microcomparative perspectives. A considerable number of ScanDiaSyn collaborators have furthermore been active in presenting their microcomparative research at conferences, workshops, and guest lectures in Europe and elsewhere.

At the level of the more concrete goals for the project the Icelandic sub-project is the one that has reached the furthest. The Icelandic collaborators are well under way with the data collection. They have identified the most interesting points of variation in the Icelandic and Faroese domain, and have therefore not been so reliant on the existence of a common questionnaire for the whole area. Establishing this questionnaire has taken longer than expected but it is expected to be finalized in the spring of 2007

before the collection of data in Denmark commences. Some follow-up collection is then expected to be necessary also in Iceland and the Faroe Islands.

A dynamic and searchable bibliographical database for Scandinavian dialect syntax has been established at the ScanDiaSyn web site. The basis for the database was a couple of existing bibliographies, and anyone who wishes to contribute to the database with information on relevant literature can do so online. It is also possible to leave summaries or comments to items in the bibliography as well as hyperlinks to downloadable papers.

Regarding the ScanLex project the Oslo group has developed methods for automatically generating multilingual word-lists on the basis of multilingual corpora. The work has partly progressed in cooperation with the Scandinavian sister project *Netordbogen* and with contacts at the University of Leipzig. An online version of this multilingual wordlist can be tested at http://ordbok.nada.kth.se:8070/ordbog_module/ordbog. The list includes a pre-existing beta-version of ScanLex limited to pronouns and modal verbs which can be accessed at the ScanDiaSyn home page.

9. Conclusion

In conclusion the joint Scandinavian efforts for the study of dialectal syntactic variation have made some valuable achievements, and there are clear advantages of initiating large-scale collaboration of this sort: synergies obtain both at the level of the individual researchers who interact and exchange their results and opinions and at the disciplinary level since the research becomes more focused. Besides, as pointed out in Sandøy (this volume), the cultural unity that prevails across the Nordic communities is probably an advantage also at the level of research and something that the ScanDiaSyn collaboration benefits from.

Another favorable aspect of ScanDiaSyn is the object of study. The Scandinavian language area is generally considered a single continuous dialect area, and it is to some extent puzzling that no such large scale pan-Scandinavian dialect investigation has been undertaken before. In practical life the existing dialect archives and collections are by and large national and often even regional (within one of the countries). Furthermore, larger dialect projects have rarely crossed national boundaries, the most obvious examples being the various large scale dialect dictionaries that exist in all of the countries. Likewise the recent SweDia 2000 project did include Swedish spoken in Finland, but was nevertheless restricted to the areas of Scandinavia where Swedish is the standard written language.

One important reason for this situation probably has to do with the way research is financed: the “big money” for research projects is mostly avail-

able at the national level. Fortunately, the strong sense of unity in the Nordic countries also manifests itself at the political level, and collaboration on research policies and researcher training at the supranational level does exist. This has been an important incentive for ScanDiaSyn since there was such Nordic money available for preparation in the initial phase. And furthermore the network grant from NordForsk and the grant for project administration from NOS-HS have certainly sufficed to glue the network together.

Nevertheless, the reliance on national funding is, as we have seen above, currently the most important obstacle for reaching some of the objectives of ScanDiaSyn: we have not obtained the necessary support in all countries. In that perspective one could wish that there were more pan-Nordic research funding available than what is currently the case, not just network money and not just money tied up in programs of excellence. This is similar to some of the challenges pointed out by Sandøy (this volume) regarding the pan-Nordic project on modern loan words that he has been in charge of. Both projects could thus be taken as support for the current ideas of establishing a joint Nordic Research Council and for strengthening the Nordic countries as a common region for research collaboration in Europe and in the world.

In any event the ScanDiaSyn collaboration will continue for years still, and there is good hope that the collaboration will strengthen our knowledge about the Scandinavian language area considerably.

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